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Description Notes

Briefing to Dr. Custis/Acting General Counsel

I. Agent Orange Events That Will Impact Upon VA

University of Nebraska Fat Biopsy Report

J.R.B. Literature Analysis

DOD Information on RH Abort Missions

A. Fat Biopsy Report

TCDD levels from 20-186 ppt found in adipose tissue from three Vietnam veterans "heavily exposed" to Herbicide Orange. Other tissue samples from "non-exposed" Vietnam veterans and controls <20 ppt.

Significance

Dr. Gross et al have probably distributed report. May expect Vietnam veterans and press to respond in very near future.

VA Action Options

1. Take no action and write article for New England Journal of Medicine relating Dr. Gross's values to VA's description of exposure and supporting medical data.
2. Call Dr. Gross and explain "Scientific Method" or lack of in selecting individuals, determining exposure index, and no knowledge on "jobs" since Vietnam. Offer to incorporate medical data into "one," more complete manuscript.
3. Submit manuscript to Agent Orange Working Group (AOWG) Science Panel for evaluation and go public with evaluation. Submit medical data at same time. Following evaluation, submit manuscript for publication. Advise Dr. Gross of action. May want to submit manuscript to Panel of VA Scientists. AOWG Science Panel meets 15 September 1981.

B. JRB LITERATURE ANALYSIS

JRB has been given extension of 15 days (to 30 September) to complete manuscript. Extension given to incorporate primary references, fat biopsy information (previously published) and review additional articles on cacodylic acid.

Briefing to Dr. Custis/Acting General Counsel
(Continued)

Significance

Time delay may provide signal to vet groups on potential problems. However, VA interested only in a "First-Rate Report" from JRB. VA has not inputed to scientific assessment; rather has been instrumental in obtaining references unavailable to JRB. Preliminary review conducted by Major Young (unofficial and at JRB's request--to check completeness of literature searches); his assessment is that the Literature Report will have significant impact. Report may "alarm" many groups because of volume of scientific data validating extreme toxicity and cellular persistence of TCDD.

VA Response Options

1. Upon receipt of report, submit to appropriate Congressional committees and convene VA Advisory Group to receive thorough briefing on report. Prepare press releases.
2. Upon receipt, submit report to AOWG Science Panel, VA Advisory Committee Membership (via mail) and to appropriate Congressional committees with letter explaining action. Input literature and VA Environmental Physicians attendance at Dioxin Symposiums to show "Continuing Education Process."

C. DOD Information on Ranch Hand Abort Missions

On 10 September 1981, Major Young attended DOD/HHS meeting on new records uncovered by Army record search indicating that Ranch Hand aircraft aborted 92 times during period 1965-1971. During aborts entire contents (21,000 gallons) was jettisoned within 20-40 second. Many of these aborts occurred during take-offs from Ranch Hand bases (Bien Hoa and Da Nang) and may have resulted in exposure of thousands of military personnel. HHS/DOD have brought in Dr. Pat Honchar (NIOSH) to review preliminary information and to make report to AOWG Science Panel on 15 September.

Significance

Report to AOWG will mean report will go public. News media and vet groups will make "hay" since it may mean more veterans exposed then previously thought. Coupled with Dr. Gross biopsy report on TCDD in Vietnam veterans' fat, it may elicit response from Congress. Information will also complicate conduct of VA EPI Study on ground troops. May force EPI study of "Vietnam Experience."

BRIEFING NOTES

11 Sept 1981

Briefing to Dr. Custis/Acting General Counsel
(Continued)

RECOMMENDATION

Administrator and VA staff must be fully aware of situation and be prepared to make statements. Advise Administrator to indicate VA following DOD record search carefully and providing assistance as requested (note: Major Young and CHECO data). Also VA working on and with AOWG Science Panel.